



In Honour of Hugh
de Boves and Hugh
Cook Faringdon,
First and Last
Abbots of
Reading.

BX
4668.2
.H84
H87
1911
IMST





Ad311/42



AN ANCIENT SHRINE.

Interesting Discovery at Caversham

During the work of excavating for the centre pier of the new Caversham Bridge the discovery has been made of the foundations of a 13-14th century chapel of Our Lady, the site of which is shown on the Ordnance map. The chapel has an interesting history, and, as may be gathered from the records, it was at one time an object of great veneration by reason of the unique character of various sacred relics deposited there. It was really a shrine, and the great attraction to the pilgrims from all parts of the country was an iron spear, said to be the identical spear which pierced the side of our Lord, and which, according to tradition, was brought to Caversham by an angel with one wing. Another relic, it is stated, was part of the halter which Judas Iscariot used when he hanged himself. The chapel also contained a silver-plated image of the Virgin Mary. The shrine, which belonged to the Canons of Nottley, in Buckingham, was dismantled by John London at the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539, when the image of the Virgin and of the angel with one wing were packed in a box and sent by barge to Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex.

JUDAS ISCARIOT'S HALTER.

During excavation work at Caversham Bridge, Berks, the foundations have been discovered of a thirteenth-century chapel, which as a shrine once contained, it is said, the head of the iron spear which pierced the Saviour's side, and part of the halter with which Judas Iscariot hanged himself.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

In Honour of Hugh
de Boves and Hugh
Cook Faringdon,
First and Last
Abbots of
Reading.

BY

JAMIESON B. HURRY, M.A., M.D.

MDCCCXI.

*This Booklet was published
in connection with the Unveiling
of the Memorials in the
Chapter House of Reading
Abbey by Sir William Osler,
Bart., on July 10th, 1911.*



Contents.

| | PAGE |
|--------------------------------|------|
| I. The Prologue - - - | 5 |
| II. Abbot Hugh de Boves - | 9 |
| III. Abbot Hugh Cook Faringdon | 18 |
| IV. The Memorials - - - | 32 |

i. Prologue.

WELL-NIGH eight hundred years have rolled by since the great Norman King Henry Beauclerc laid the foundations of that "Noble and Royal Monastery of Reading," which he dedicated for ever to the Glory of God and the Service of Man. And for over four hundred years the prayers of the Royal Founder were richly fulfilled. His great Foundation became a home of spiritual worship and Christian benevolence. Within the aisles of the glorious Minster the voices of saintly men were ever pealing heavenward in intercession for the sins of mankind, while at the Gate hovered the Angel of Mercy ministering to the pilgrim, to the poor, to the leper.

What a benediction to Radingia was this noble House of God, a silent witness of inimitable beauty, keeping watch and ward over the little Burgh, ever raising the thoughts of the citizens from the material to the spiritual, from the temporal to the eternal. How the Abbey itself contributed to the progress of commerce, of education,

Prologue.

of literature and of art. How it brought the life of the Burgh into touch with the life of the Nation, giving birth to such memories as rank amongst the most precious possessions of a community. And yet, on the other hand, we cannot forget how that *grand Seigneur*, the Lord Abbot, the Peer of Parliament, sadly thwarted the aspirations of the burghers for commercial, political and religious liberty, and for many a long year turned a deaf ear to their legitimate appeals.

It is in truth an irreparable loss to Reading as well as to England at large that such scanty landmarks have survived the ravages of time, the havoc of Civil War, and the cupidity of the road-maker and the builder. What sacrifices would we not make to-day could we but restore the ancient Abbey in its original magnificence ! Think of its Minster, so imposing in dimensions, so splendid in decoration, so rich in historical associations ! Think of the sculptured effigies of King Henry Beauclerc and his Queen Adeliza adorned with all the insignia of royalty ! Think of the superb shrine of St. James to which flocked pilgrims from far and near to kneel

Prologue.

and pray before the highly prized relic of so great an Apostle !

But something may still be done to help us reconstruct in imagination that architectural *chef d'oeuvre*, whose majestic ruins, in their grey scarred beauty, have weathered the storms of centuries, and to keep alive an ever-present consciousness that the good old Burgh of Radingia has played a worthy part in the making of England. And we shall find our reward in a growth of patriotism, in a Hellenic passion to serve, to the last-drawn breath, the dear Home-land.

And something may still be done to keep in remembrance those good men and true who helped to make our Abbey famous, and whose names are "on fame's eternall bead-roll worthie to be fyled."

The very names of many of our benefactors are unknown. The tomb-stones on which their record was engraved have vanished for ever. Of others happily the story survives to this day. Sometimes the services were rendered at home to the poor, the sick, the wayfarer. "Toutes les misères trouvèrent un soulagement dans cette riche

Prologue.

et puissante maison de Reading.” At other times the services were national, in the Councils and Parliaments of the nation. And even on the stage of European history our Chronicles shew that Reading Abbey played no unimportant a part.

The Memorial Cross which rises in the Forbury Gardens reminds us of the great Norman King, who selected Reading as the site of the superb Abbey in which he found his final resting-place.

And we are about to add our tribute to two other great men, to the first and last of the Abbots, Hugh de Boves and Hugh Cook Faringdon. Each has his name writ large on the page of history, and they worthily begin and end the long roll of thirty-one Abbots ruling over those monks who were “a noble pattern of holiness, and an example of unwearied and delightful hospitality.”

ii.

Abbot Hugh de Boves.

HUGH DE BOVES, a man “*fide et bonis operibus plenus*,” *full of faith and good works*, was appointed first Abbot of Reading on April 15th, 1123 (1). The choice was doubtless made by King Henry himself, who had known Hugh for some years, and selected him as the man most likely to organise efficiently the splendid Abbey that was being erected at Reading, and to make it a home of Christian worship and benevolence.

Hugh de Boves, a descendant of the Counts of Amiens, and sometimes called Hugues III. d'Amiens, was born at Laon towards the close of the eleventh century, and educated under Anselm, one of the celebrated theologians of the day. Although liberally endowed with this world's goods, Hugh preferred a monastic career with its leisure for study and good works. Accordingly he took monastic vows and entered the Abbey of Cluny, renowned all the world over for the piety and prestige of its

(1) This date is taken from the *Flores Historiarum* ; some Authorities give 1125.

Abbot Hugh de Boves.

Abbots and for the boundless hospitality and missionary enthusiasm of its brethren. Hugh was certainly at Cluny from 1099 to 1113, and won golden opinions from his superiors. "Nous n'avons point oublié," wrote Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, to him some years later, "combien votre érudition et votre piété ont fait d'honneur à ce grand et saint troupeau de Cluny." This good reputation led to his appointment in 1113 as Prior of St. Martial's at Limoges, one of the daughter houses of Cluny, where his zeal attracted the attention of King Henry I., at whose express wish he was soon afterwards promoted to be Prior of St. Pancras, at Lewes, in the diocese of Chichester, the headquarters of the Cluniacs in England. His arrival on English soil gave the King opportunities for a closer acquaintance, and a high opinion was formed of the Prior's character and learning.

The reigning family of England since the days of the Conquest had shown a high regard for the Abbey and brethren of Cluny. William the Conqueror begged its Abbot to come over and govern the religious affairs of England, and a spiritual mission was sent in response under the

Abbot Hugh de Boves.

guidance of Warmond, a monk of Cluny. Rufus showered benefactions on the Cluniac house at Bermondsey. Henry Beauclerc was one of the most liberal contributors to the great basilica of St. Peter and St. Paul at Cluny and accorded his special protection to the Priory of St. Pancras at Lewes. No wonder that in the selection of an Abbot for his favourite Abbey at Reading Cluny was not forgotten.

Meanwhile Peter, the Prior of Cluny, with seven brethren, aided by some monks from St. Pancras, was busily engaged in building the Abbey at Reading, which King Henry had founded on June 18th, 1121, and which he was endowing at his own cost on the most lavish scale. As soon as the building had advanced sufficiently for occupation, Prior Peter returned to Cluny, and the organisation was entrusted by the King to the learned and saintly Prior of St. Pancras, who became the first Abbot of Reading.

The fame of the new Abbot and doubtless also the favour shewn to his noble Foundation by King Henry soon attracted other brethren, who became inspired with

Abbot Hugh de Boves.

the same spiritual fervour as was their head. Small wonder that under such an Abbot the brethren of Reading became famous for the sanctity of their life and for their unwearied devotion to the "entertainment of the poor and the stranger"(1).

Unhappily Hugh was not allowed to remain at the head of the Abbey for many years, for, on the death of Archbishop Geoffroi le Breton, he was, much against his will and greatly to the regret of the brethren at Reading, elected to the See of Rouen. For permission to accept this appointment the consent of the Bishop of Salisbury (in whose diocese Reading then was), of the King and of Pope Honorius II. had to be obtained. The necessary permission however was granted in due course, and early in September, 1130, the King took Hugh with him to Normandy, visiting the Abbey of Bec, and then proceeding to Rouen, where Hugh was consecrated Archbishop on September 14th, 1130, in the Cathedral of St. Ouen, the officiating

(1) Hugh was one of the chief propagators of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which was introduced in 1121 at Bury St. Edmunds by Abbot Anselm, the nephew of St. Anselm. Cf. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. vii., p. 678.

Abbot Hugh de Boves.

prelates being the bishop of Bayeux and other bishops of the Province(1).

Even after being made Archbishop, Hugh continued to live according to the monastic rule, and, in order to help him, chose three of his Reading colleagues, Helias, Ausgerius and Victor, to be his chaplains at Rouen.

King Henry well knew what a power for good could be wielded by the Archbishop on the political and religious affairs of Normandy, and at that critical period doubtless wished that so strong and religious a man as Hugh should occupy the office (2). In his province the new Archbishop proved a vigorous administrator, doing his best to keep the turbulent Abbots of Normandy under control. Hitherto those Abbots held that they owed no obedience to any metropolitan, and Henry Beauclerc supported them in their view and wrote a letter to the Pope pleading their cause. This led to a great quarrel, for Hugh was very jealous of

(1) In Pommeraye's *Histoire des Archevêques de Rouen*, Hugh is placed 50th on the roll of Archbishops.

(2) For fuller details of this period in Hugh's life, cf. Hébert, *Revue des Questions Historiques*, 1898, Oct.

Abbot Hugh de Boves.

episcopal prerogatives, and although baffled for a long time he eventually succeeded in exacting an oath of obedience to himself as the metropolitan. Hugh also took a strenuous part with Pope Innocent II. in the celebrated conflict against the Anti-pope Anacletus, and entertained that Pope as well as King Henry as his guests at Rouen in 1131.

Two important ecclesiastical Councils were held about this period, one at Rheims in 1131 and one at Pisa in 1135, at which vital questions of theology and ethics affecting the Church were discussed. At the former Hugh took an active part as representative of the King of England, while after that at Pisa he was appointed Papal legate in Italy. But these great functions were not allowed to interfere with the business of his province, into which he threw himself with amazing vigour, and there is abundant evidence of the wisdom and lofty ideals that characterised his rule. As a reward for these services the archiepiscopal authority of Hugh and his successors was considerably extended by the Pope, while some fresh endowments were added to the See.

Abbot Hugh de Boves.

In December, 1135, Hugh was called to the death-bed of his beloved patron and sovereign Henry Beauclerc, who had been taken ill at Bois-Lion, near Rouen, and who retained his confidence in Hugh in spite of many divergencies of view both in political and in religious matters. Hugh hastened to obey the summons and gives an account of the King's death in a letter written to Pope Innocent II. : "He confessed his sins, beat his breast and laid aside all animosities. . . . He devoutly adored the Cross of our Lord and received His body and blood. . . . At his own devout request, I anointed him with Holy Oil. Thus he rested in peace, and may God grant him the peace that he loved." The King's body was embalmed, wrapped in bull's hides, and conveyed first to Rouen and then to Caen, where it remained for nearly four weeks awaiting a fair passage to England. Eventually it was brought over to Reading, where the obsequies were celebrated with great pomp in the Abbey Church, on January 4th, 1136, in the presence of King Stephen, the Archbishops, Bishops and nobles of the Realm.

Abbot Hugh de Boves.

After the death of King Henry, Hugh espoused the cause of Stephen, and gave strenuous support to the government. But for the most part he was kept busy in Normandy, although he came over for the coronation of Henry II. at Westminster in 1154. He died on November 10th, 1164(1), after holding the see of Rouen for thirty-four years "honeste et viriliter," and was buried in the Cathedral of Rouen, where there is the following epitaph composed by Arnold of Lisieux :

EPITAPH.

Inter pontifices speciali dignus honore
Hic nostrae carnis Hugo resignat onus.
Consignata brevi clauduntur membra sepulcro.
Non tamen acta viri claudit uterque polus.
Quidquid dispensat et compartitur in omnes,
Gratia contulerat, praestiteratque viro.
Foecundos igitur virtutum copia fructus
Fecit et ultra hominem est magnificatus homo.
Tandem post celebris felicia tempora vitae,
Sustulit emeritum flebilis hora senem.
Par, Martine, tibi consorsque futurus eamdem
Sortitus tecum est commoriendo diem.

Perhaps the best summary of his character may be found in the fragment of

(1) Some Authorities give Oct. 12.

Abbot Hugh de Boves.

a distich which was probably applied to him by a contemporary :

“Amor plebis, tremor Hugo potentum,
Clarus avis, clarus studiis, recreator egentum.”

Hugh de Boves wrote several important theological Works which have been reprinted in Migne's "*Patrologiae Cursus*," and throw much light on the ecclesiastical history of the Church in the twelfth century and on the duties of a hard-working Bishop. Amongst those Works are the *Dialogorum seu Quaestionum Theologicarum Libri Septem*, a work which was widely read, and which is of special interest owing to the fact that six out of the seven books were written at Reading Abbey. The literary history of this town may therefore be said to have begun with its first Abbot.

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

THE second Memorial is in honour of the last Abbot of Reading—another Hugh appointed by another King Henry, and for many years equally in favour with his Sovereign. But how differently the story ends. The first Hugh ministered to King Henry I. at the royal death-bed. The last Hugh passed along a *via dolorosa* to the gibbet and the quartering-block for refusing to surrender his Abbey to King Henry VIII.

Hugh Cook Faringdon probably derived the name Faringdon from the place of his birth, and belonged to the gentry who so often sent their children to a monastery for their education. At the death of Abbot Thomas Worcester in 1520, Faringdon held the office of sub-chamberlain, from which he was promoted to be Abbot by the suffrages of his brethren, the election being confirmed by the King on September 26th. Soon afterwards the newly installed Abbot received a visit from King Henry VIII., to whom he gave a “goodly present of great pykes, great carps, salmon, sturgeon and other fish.”

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

Faringdon appears to have been a man of strong character, with decided religious views and willing to uphold them even at the cost of his life. There is some evidence pointing to a taste for literature and study, since he laments that fate had denied him the advantages of a career at Oxford. Moreover Leonard Cox, the head-master of Reading School, in 1524 dedicated to him a book entitled "The art or craft of Rhetorick," as to one "who hath allwayes tenderly favoured the profyte of yonge studentes."

A strict discipline was maintained both at Reading and at the dependent priory of Leominster, and Faringdon took his share in public affairs as was expected of a mitred Abbot. His name is found among the Justices of the Peace for Berkshire.

In 1530 Faringdon joined with other spiritual Lords in petitioning Pope Clement VII. to grant the divorce of Henry VIII. and Catherine of Aragon. Indeed at that time he appears to have been on terms of intimate friendship with the King, who nicknamed him "his own Abbot," and used to exchange New Year gifts. On one

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

occasion when Henry VIII. was hunting in the neighbourhood of Reading, Faringdon sent him presents of fish, probably Kennet trout, and wood-knives.

Of the Abbot's zeal for the Roman Catholic religion, in its struggle with the new heresies springing up on every side, some proof exists in a letter written in 1530 to the University of Oxford. There happened at that time to be at the Abbey a monk called Dom John Holyman, who had resigned a Fellowship at New College, Oxford, in order to take the cowl at Reading. Holyman seems to have been a stout adversary of Lutheranism, so much so that Faringdon requests that Holyman, instead of preaching the usual sermon before the University for a doctor's degree, may be allowed to preach in London instead, as that city was infected with Lutheranism, and needed such a popular defender of the faith.

On the question of the royal supremacy, Faringdon appears to have been a good Catholic. It is true that in 1536 he signed the articles of faith passed by Convocation at the King's desire, which virtually

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

acknowledged the royal supremacy ; but he probably never intended to reject Papal authority in spiritual matters, drawing a distinction, like others in those days, between the Church of England and the Catholic Church. Indeed, a contemporary writer quotes him as having stated that, when sworn to the King's supremacy, he added in his conscience, "of the temporal Church, but not of the spiritual"; and further "that he would pray for the Pope's holiness as long as he lived, and would once a week say Mass for him, trusting that by such good prayers the Pope should rise again and have the King's highness with all the whole realm in subjection, as he hath had in time past."

In political matters Faringdon loyally supported the King, and at the time of the great Northern insurrection in 1536 was found amongst those contributing men to fight against the rebel forces. The town of Reading itself, on the other hand, appears to have had communications with the rebel leader, Robert Aske, for copies of one of his letters and apparently his proclamation were put into circulation. Probably John Eynon, a priest of the Church of St. Giles, Reading,

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

and a special friend of Abbot Faringdon, was also in league with the insurgents. But there is no suggestion of any complicity on the part of the Abbot, who presided at the examination held in December 1536 to investigate the matter.

An unfortunate incident happened in 1537, which may have prejudiced Henry VIII. against Faringdon. The nation was at this time strongly opposed to many of the royal schemes, which gave rise to seething discontent. On the other hand any expression of disapprobation was eagerly watched for by the royal spies, ever ready to construe even idle words into treason. For example, the inadvertent spreading of a rumour that the King was in bad health, or, still worse, that he was dead, was liable to be exaggerated into an act of disloyalty. When therefore in December, 1537, a report reached Reading that Henry VIII. was dead, and Faringdon wrote to some neighbours to tell them of the report, this act, so natural in itself, was magnified into a grave charge. "For think ye," says a contemporary writer, "that the abbot of Reading deserved any less to be hanged, what time as he wrote letters of the King's

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

death unto divers gentlemen in Berkshire, considering in what a queasy case the realm stood in at that same season? . . . and did enough, if God had not stretched forth his helping hand, to set the realm in as great an uproar as ever it was, and yet the King's majesty, of his royal clemency, forgave him." Pardon however was granted as an act of royal magnanimity, and Faringdon continued in the favour of his King, enjoying all the prestige of a local magnate, of a mitred Abbot, and of a Peer of the Realm.

The Martyrdom.

The Martyrdom of Hugh Faringdon forms one of the most dramatic incidents in the Dissolution of the Monasteries by King Henry VIII., and brought to an abrupt conclusion the life of that ancient home of religion and learning whose history is so closely interwoven with that of this Borough.

Side by side with Reading Abbey were flourishing, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the House of the Grey Friars at

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

Reading, and the famous Chapel of the Blessed Mary and the Shrine at Caversham. This Shrine possessed a noted image of Our Lady, plated over with silver, and also a relic, viz. "an angel with one wing, that brought to Caversham the spear's head that pierced our Saviour's side upon the Cross." These highly prized possessions had made Caversham a place of great pilgrimage. Within a few months of each other the Abbey, the Friary and the Caversham Chapel and Shrine were all suppressed.

In 1536 an Act of Parliament had been passed dissolving the smaller monasteries, viz. religious houses which possessed an annual income of less than £200, the Act being agreed to on the assurance of the King that evil lives were being led in such smaller monasteries. Of this, says the preamble to the Act, Henry had "knowledge . . . as well by the 'compertes' of his late Visitation as by sundry credible informations." As a further reason it was alleged that the religious in the small monasteries would be useful in swelling the ranks of "divers and great solemn monasteries of the realm (wherein, thanks be to God, religion is right well kept and observed)." A large number

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

of monasteries were suppressed as a result of this Act, the spoils yielding a sum of no less than £100,000 to the Royal purse. The political disturbances in the north, where the monks had been more popular than further south, somewhat checked the progress of the dissolutions. But as soon as the insurgents had been crushed, further suppressions were undertaken, and the last hour of the House of the Grey Friars and of the Abbey at Reading, together with the Chapel at Caversham was soon to strike.

Hitherto the attainder of an Abbot for treason had not been held to affect the property of the Abbey over which he ruled. But the King now decided to confiscate such property as part of the punishment imposed on the head for supposed or real treason, and on this plea several of the larger monasteries were dealt with, although according to the Act of 1536 only those with a yearly income of under £200 could be suppressed.

In order to obtain the sanction of Parliament for these further measures, a Bill was introduced in April 1539, covering the illegal suppression of the greater monasteries, and granting to the King all "Abbathies,

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

Priorities, etc., which hereafter shall happen to be dissolved, suppressed, renounced, relinquished, forfeited, given up or come into the King's Highness." There is also a parenthesis referring to such others as "shall happen to come to the King's Highness by Attainder or Attainders of Treason." These Henry and his heirs were to hold for ever, any houses subsequently surrendered or dissolved being similarly treated. As soon as this Act was passed, monasteries that had hitherto escaped were attacked. Even such important Abbeys as Glastonbury, Colchester and Reading fell a prey to Thomas Cromwell, the King's vice-gerent, the *malleus monachorum*.

It was in August 1538 that Dr. John London, one of the royal commissioners for the visitation of monasteries, who soon became notorious for the wholesale desecration he carried out, arrived in Reading. On August 31 he wrote to Thomas Cromwell that Peter Schefford, Warden of the Grey Friars, desired licence for his friars "to change their garments," *i.e.* to abandon their monastic habit. The Warden's request appears to have been immediately granted, since by September 13th the Friary was

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

surrendered. By the 14th the Church (the windows of which were "full of friars"), images, altars and dorter had been defaced, and the friars turned out of doors in secular apparel.

The famous Shrine at Caversham was also treated with scant ceremony. By September 17th, 1538, the famous silver image of Our Lady had been pulled down and nailed up in a chest, ready to be sent by barge to Cromwell's house in London, the three coats, cap and hair of the image being also despatched. The renowned angel, "the principal relic of idolatry in England," met with a similar fate, the lights, shrouds, crutches, images of wax, &c., about the Chapel being all defaced. The only relic that escaped was a reputed "piece of the holy halter Judas was hanged with," which may have been hidden from the spoiler.

These events must have caused profound anxiety to Hugh Faringdon in the adjacent Abbey, and not without cause, for Dr. London seized the opportunity of his being at Reading, to inquire what the Abbot's views might be. On September 14th, 1538, he wrote to Cromwell that the Abbot "said,

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

as they all do, he was at the King's command, but loth be they to come to any free surrender." Three days later London promises to send to Cromwell by his servant "a token in parchment under the convent seal from the Abbot and convent." Unhappily it is not known what this said token was. But by September 18th he had required the Abbot to show him the relics, which was willingly done, and after making an inventory had locked them up behind the High Altar. The Abbot's reply and his readiness to exhibit the relics (if London's account can be trusted) seem to show that at this time he was not altogether unwilling to consider the question of a surrender, and this feeling possibly London wished to strengthen by the favourable report he made to Cromwell on the state of the Abbey. "They have," he writes, "a gudde lecture in Scripture dayly redde in ther chapitour-howse, both in Inglyshe and Laten, to the wich ys gudde resortt, and the abbott ys at yt hym self."

Doubtless Faringdon had many searchings of heart as to his duty during the next few months. But when once his conscience bade him remain loyal to the Pope as

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

supreme Head of the Church, all hesitation vanished. Between May 19th, 1539, when the Act dealing with the monasteries was passed, and the following September Faringdon appears to have been again sounded as to a voluntary surrender of his Abbey into the King's hands. But neither threats of violence nor promises of generous treatment induced compliance. A fresh charge was therefore invented, viz. loyalty to the Holy See, such loyalty implying a denial of the King's spiritual supremacy, and being treated as equivalent to treason. Faringdon was too convinced a Catholic to deny his faith in the Pope. Accordingly he was arrested about September 17th and imprisoned in the Tower. There he probably formed one of a group of prisoners including the Abbots of Glastonbury and Colchester, who communicated with each other by means of a blind harper, named William Moore, and encouraged each other to resist the King.

As a Peer of the realm, Faringdon should have been arraigned before Parliament on a charge of treason. But no trial under attainder took place, and he was condemned to the death of a traitor as a result of secret

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

inquisitions in the Tower. In the "*Remembrances*" written with Cromwell's own hand, we read "The Abbot Redyng to be sent down to be tried and executed at Redyng with his complices," proof that the ultimate issue had been determined beforehand.

After being imprisoned in the Tower for about two months, Faringdon was brought down to Reading, and underwent a trial that was nothing more than a ghastly mockery of Justice. In the great hall of the Abbey Gateway, which survives to this day, the great Lord Abbot, a Peer of Parliament, was condemned to die the death meted out to the felon and the outlaw. Even when brought face to face with eternity, Faringdon did not quail at the presence of death. To the crowd that flocked round the scaffold, he boldly declared the cause for which he was about to die—fidelity to the see of Rome, the common faith of those who best knew the true teaching of the English Church.

A traitor's death was accompanied with every ignominy. First came the stretching of the limbs on a hurdle which was jolted

Abbot Hugh Faringdon.

through the streets of Reading by a horse. Then followed the death on the gallows, with barbarous accessories—block, cleaver, and caldron of pitch waiting for the kindling match. Truly those were days of refined cruelty !

So perished the last Abbot of Reading, two of his colleagues, John Eynon and John Rugg, being executed at the same time, probably on a similar charge.

Well may Reading hold in everlasting remembrance that ancient Abbey, the home of religion and learning, whose history is so closely intertwined with her own, and the good and brave last Abbot who laid down his life "pro Christo et ecclesia," martyred for defending the Church against the Crown(1).

(1) Other Authorities base the execution of the Abbots of Glastonbury and Reading on a charge that they had supplied the northern insurgents with money. But in any case the procedure was an outrage on justice.

iv. The Memorials.

THE two Memorials are carved each out of a single slab of blue Forest of Dean stone, measuring 6 feet by 5 feet 6 inches, and represent in bold relief scenes from the lives of the first and last Abbots. Mr. W. Ravenscroft, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A., designed the architectural portions of the Memorials, and Mr. W. S. Frith, sculptor, the scenes, the whole of the work being executed by Mr. Frith.

ABBOT HUGH DE BOVES

is represented as receiving the insignia of his office at the hands of King Henry Beauclerc, the design being based on a rough sketch of a similar event, probably by Matthew of Paris. King Henry is accompanied by men at arms, while the Abbot is supported by some of his tonsured brethren, who are bearing a reliquary in honour of so auspicious an occasion. This memorial bears the arms of Reading Abbey, and also a panel with a *boeuf paissant*, a rebus on the name of *Boves*. The following Inscription is placed at the base of the Tablet :

The Memorials.

TO THE MEMORY OF HUGH DE BOVES,
FIRST ABBOT OF READING (A.D. 1123-1130),
AFTERWARDS ARCHBISHOP OF ROUEN
(1130-1160).

‘AMOR PLEBIS, TREMOR POTENTUM,
CLARUS AVIS, CLARUS STUDIIS, RECREATOR
EGENTUM.’

ABBOT HUGH FARINGDON,

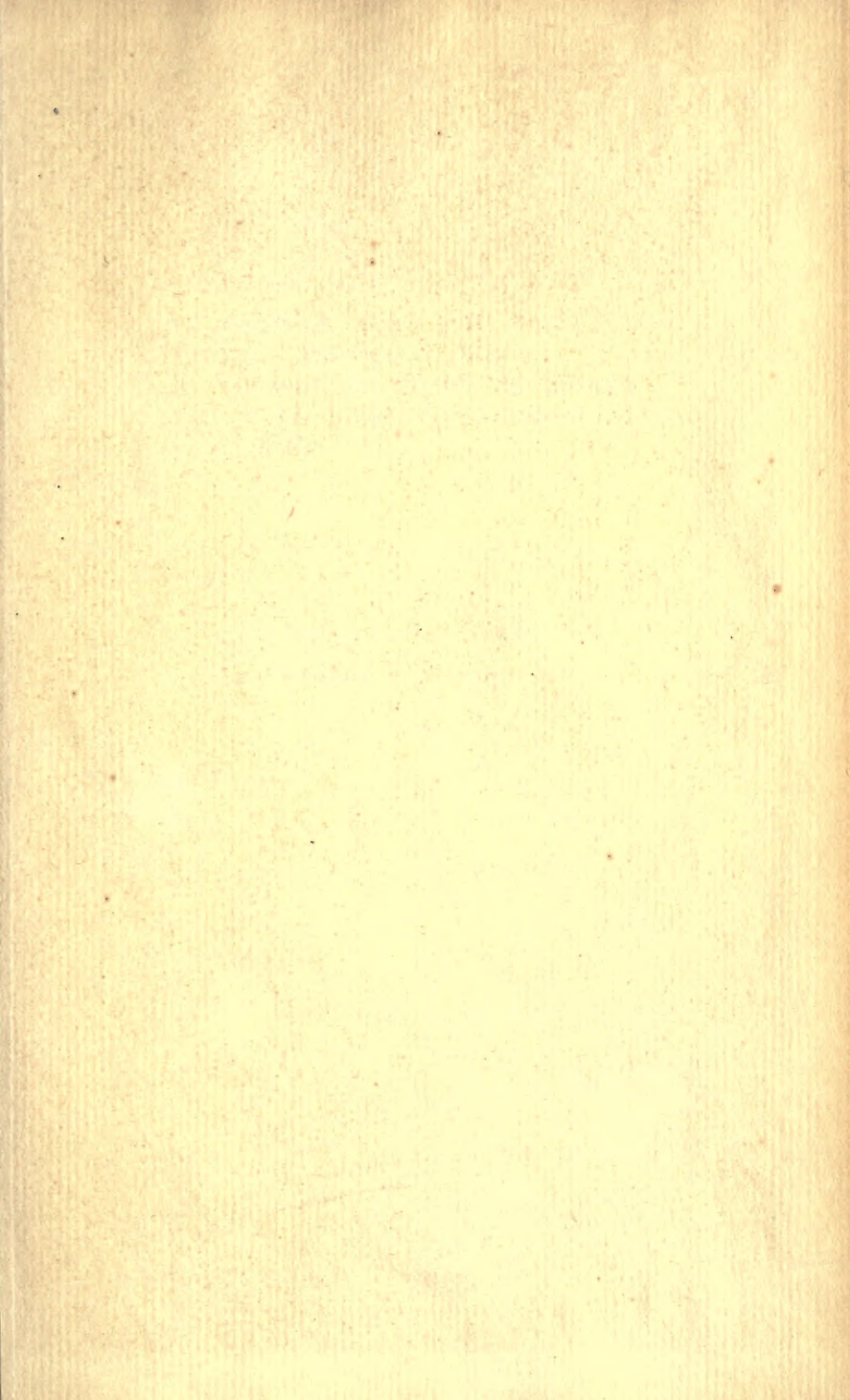
with a rope round his neck, stands at the foot of the gallows in the act of addressing the burghers of Reading who have flocked to witness the last scene prior to the dissolution of Reading Abbey. Close by are the two monastic brethren who share his cruel fate. The background is filled by a crowd of soldiers and burghers. Two coats of arms are carved on this Memorial, viz. that of Reading Abbey, and the personal arms of Hugh Faringdon. The Inscription at the foot reads as follows :

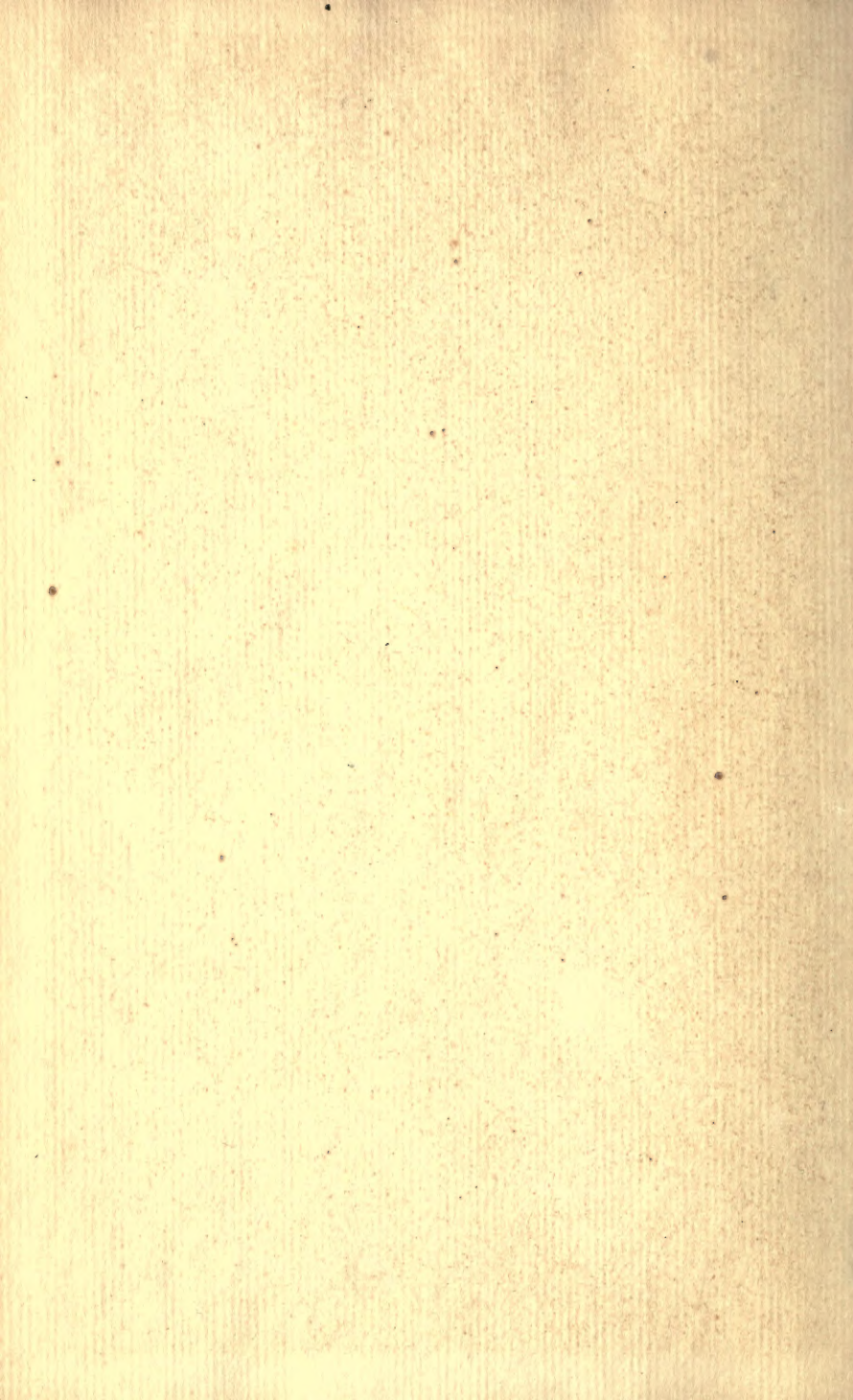
TO THE MEMORY OF HUGH COOK FARINGDON,
LAST ABBOT OF READING (1520-1539),
WHO REFUSED TO SURRENDER HIS ABBEY
TO KING HENRY VIII., AND DIED ON
THE GALLOWS.

‘IN TE, DOMINE, SPERAVI.’



E. POYNDER AND SON,
THE HOLYBROOK PRESS,
GUN STREET, READING.





BX 4668.2 .H84 H87 1911 IMST
Hurry, Jamieson Boyd,
In honour of Hugh de Boves
and Hugh Cook Faringdon, fir
47228858

FUNERARY INSTITUTE
OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES
59 QUEEN'S PARK
TORONTO 5, CANADA

